

# Interpreting for Russian-Speaking LGBTQ+ Individuals

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Medical and Community Interpreter,

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# About me



- Grew up near Moscow, Russia
- Researcher / Scientist
- Moved to Bay Area, CA, in 2010
- Transitioned from life sciences to the language industry
- Works as a medical interpreter & translator at Stanford Health Care
- Trains medical interpreters at Americans Against Language Barriers (AALB)
- Certified by NBCMI, CCHI, and ATA
- Interprets in the immigration court and is involved with the local Russian-speaking community



# Our Goals

Examine relevant terminology on sexuality and gender.

Understand the basics of LGBTQ+ asylum claims.

Discuss best practices in LGBTQ+ asylum claims.

# **Key Terminology in LGBTQ(IA)+ Context**

# L

## Lesbian

A woman who is primarily attracted to women.

# G

## Gay

A man who is primarily attracted to men; sometimes a broad term for individuals primarily attracted to the same sex.

# B

## Bisexual

An individual attracted to people of their own and opposite gender.

# T

## Transgender

A person whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.

# T

## Transsexual

An outdated term that originated in the medical and psychological communities for people who have permanently changed their gender identity through surgery and hormones.

**OUTDATED**

# Q

## Queer

An umbrella term to be more inclusive of the many identities and variations that make up the LGBTQ+ community.

# Q

## Questioning

The process of exploring and discovering one's own sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

# I

## Intersex

An individual whose sexual anatomy or chromosomes do not fit with the traditional markers of "female" and "male."

# A

## Ally

Typically a non-queer person who supports and advocates for the queer community; an individual within the LGBTQ+ community can be an ally for another member that identifies differently than them.

# A

## Asexual

An individual who generally does not feel sexual desire or attraction to any group of people. It is not the same as celibacy and has many sub-groups.

**Agender**

# P

## Pansexual

A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical and/or spiritual attraction to members of all gender identities/expressions, not just people who fit into the standard gender binary.

**Polyamorous**

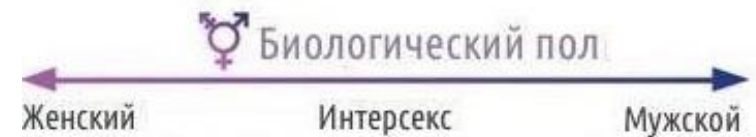
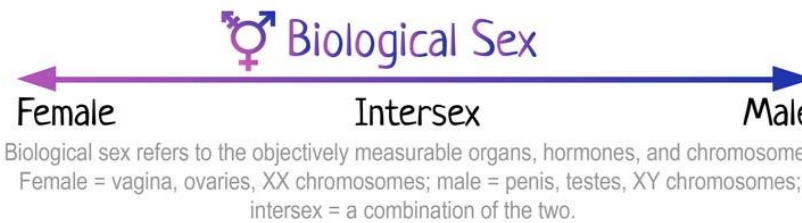
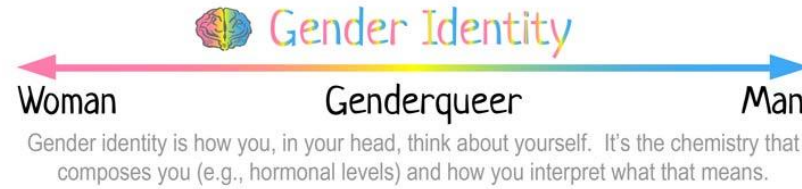
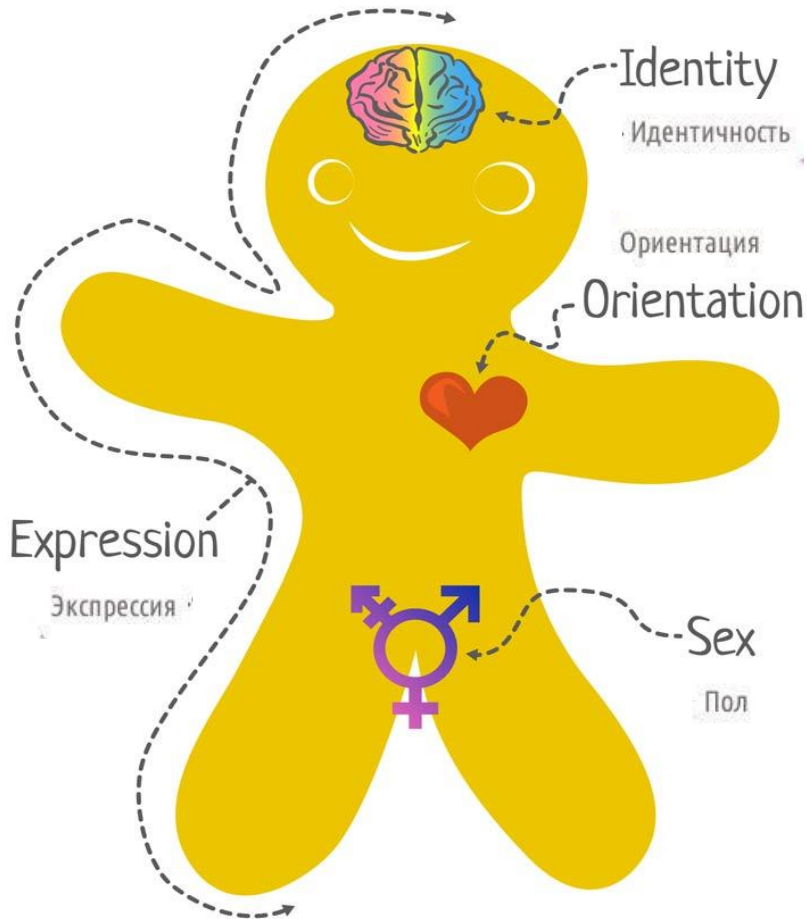


**LGBTQIAP+ = ЛГБТКИАП+**



# The Genderbread Person ГЕНДЕРНЫЙ ПРЯНИК

by [www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)



Source: <https://www.genderbread.org/resource/genderbread-person-v1>

[https://pikabu.ru/story/gendernyy\\_pryanik\\_9378927](https://pikabu.ru/story/gendernyy_pryanik_9378927)

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# **Understanding LGBTQ(IA)+ Asylum Claims**

# ASYLUM SEEKER

To be granted asylum in the United States, an asylum seeker must demonstrate that they are unable or unwilling to return to their home country due to **persecution** or a **well-founded fear of persecution** on account of race, religion, nationality, **membership in a particular social group**, or political opinion.

# ASYLUM INTERVIEW. STRUCTURE

## 1. Introduction

- Purpose Oath

## 2. Main phase (check interpreter present)

- Review of personal information in I-589, Application for Asylum and Withholding of Removal
- Circumstances of the case
- Security questions

## 3. Closing

- Questions from the Applicant
- Comments from the attorney, if present
- How to receive decision

# ASYLUM INTERVIEW. GENERAL QUESTIONS

<b>General</b>	Why did you apply for asylum? Why did you come to the U.S.?
<b>Past harm</b>	Who harmed you? Why did they do it? Can you tell me about the most significant episode of the harm you sustained?
<b>Fear of future persecution</b>	Why are you afraid to go back to your home country? Has anything else happened to you since you arrived to the U.S.? Have the threats continued? Has anything happened to your family since you have left your home country? Has the situation in your home country improved since you left?
<b>Relocation</b>	Can you safely relocate? If not, why? How would the perpetrators find you?
<b>Protection</b>	Can the police or government protect you? Have you tried to get protection from the law enforcement? If not, why not? If yes, what happened?

# **Understanding Asylum Claims for LGBTQ(IA)+ Individuals**

# LGB Applicants

<b>Sexual orientation / gender identity</b>	When did you first realize you were gay, lesbian or bisexual? Did you tell anyone? Why/why not? If yes, when? How did they react?
<b>Family &amp; Social life Coming out</b>	Does your family know you're gay? If yes, what was their reaction when you told them? What is your current relationship with your family?
<b>Fear of future harm</b>	Did you know/hear about other LGBT+ people in your home country? If yes, how were they treated? When you say people in your country want to kill people like you, can you explain what you mean by "people like you?" Can the law enforcement protect you? Can you safely relocate within your home country?
<b>Past relationships</b>	Have you ever been in a relationship? How did you and your partner meet? Are you still together/ in touch? Do you have any evidentiary proof of that relationship? Did your partner suffer any harm based on their sexual orientation?
<b>Expression of sexual orientation and gender, participation in civic life</b>	Were you involved in any LGBTQ+ organizations in your country? Are you involved in any in the U.S.? How would someone be able to know that you are gay, lesbian or bisexual?

# Transgender Applicants

<b>Gender identity</b>	When did you first realize you were transgender? When did you first realize that although you were born as a male (female) you felt more like a female (male)? How did you realize this?
<b>Family</b>	Does your family know you're transgender? Does your family know you're transgender? What is your current relationship with your family?
<b>Transition</b>	When did you begin to transition from a man to a woman or woman to a man? What steps have you taken to transition? Do you now live full-time as a man (or woman?) When did you begin to live full-time as a man (or woman)
<b>Past relationships</b>	Have you ever been in a relationship? How did you and your partner meet? Are you still together/ in touch? Do you have any pictures? Did your partner experience any harm?

# LGBTQIA+ Asylum Claims. Statistics

**1,274,500** LGBT

foreign-born adults  
in the U.S.

**13%** of asylum claims  
are LGBT-based

Undocumented LGBT  
adults in the US

**59,600** ▶ California



**43,300** ▶ Texas



**21,000** ▶ Florida



**19,600** ▶ New York



**12,900** ▶ New Jersey



**98.4%** of credible/reasonable  
fear interviews involving LGBT  
claims resulted in positive  
determinations of fear.

Source: [LGBT Claims in the U.S. \(Williams Institute, UCLA\)](#)

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# LGBT Rights in Russia 🇷🇺

Homosexuality  
  
 Varies by Region

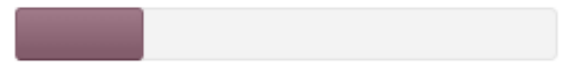
Gay Marriage  
  
**✗ Banned**

Censorship	<b>✗ Imprisonment as punishment</b>	Changing Gender	<b>✗ Illegal</b>	Gender-Affirming Care	<b>✗ Banned</b>
Non-Binary Gender Recognition	<b>✗ Not legally recognized</b>	Discrimination	<b>✗ No protections</b>	Employment Discrimination	<b>✗ No protections</b>
Housing Discrimination	<b>✗ No protections</b>	Adoption	<b>✗ Single only</b>	Intersex Infant Surgery	<b>✗ Not banned</b>
Military	<b>✗ Lesbians, gays, bisexuals permitted, transgender people banned</b>	Donating Blood	<b>✓ Legal</b>	Conversion Therapy	<b>✗ Not banned</b>
Age of Consent	Varies by Region				

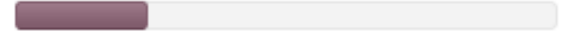


Equality Index <sup>?</sup>

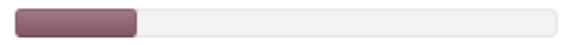
**23** / 100



Legal Rights 24 / 100



Public Opinion 22 / 100



Source: <https://www.equaldex.com/>

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# LGBT Rights in Ukraine 🇺🇦

## Homosexuality



✓ Legal

## Gay Marriage



✗ Banned

Censorship	✓ No censorship	Changing Gender	✗ Legal, but requires medical diagnosis	Gender-Affirming Care	✓ Legal
Non-Binary Gender Recognition	✗ Not legally recognized	Discrimination	✗ Illegal in some contexts	Employment Discrimination	✓ Sexual orientation and gender identity
Housing Discrimination	✗ No protections	Adoption	✗ Single only	Intersex Infant Surgery	✗ Not banned
Military	✓ Legal	Donating Blood	✓ Legal	Conversion Therapy	✗ Not banned
Age of Consent	✓ Equal				



Equality Index <sup>?</sup>

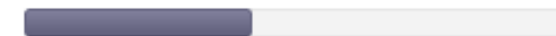
50 / 100



Legal Rights 60 / 100



Public Opinion 41 / 100



Source: <https://www.equaldex.com/>

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# **Challenges Faced by LGBTQ(IA)+ Asylum Seekers. Russian Language**

# Challenges Faced by LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers. Complex and Sensitive Topic

- Emotional Sensitivity
- Language Barriers, Ability to Articulate
- Confidentiality and Trust
- Varied Knowledge of LGBTQ+ Issues

# Key Considerations

- **Maintain a calm, neutral tone.** Use language that is inclusive and respectful, avoiding assumptions about the applicant's identity or experiences.
- **Create a safe and open environment.** Encourage an atmosphere where applicants feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment.
- **Use inclusive language.** Speak in a way that acknowledges diverse identities and experiences, and mirror the language used by the applicant to foster connection and understanding.

# Inclusive / Exclusive Language

## Words and expressions to avoid

Гомосексуалист

~~Сексуальные меньшинства,  
нетрадиционная сексуальная ориентация,  
натурал, голубой/розовая~~

Транссексуал

Трансвестит

Трансгендер

Квир

## Words and expressions to use

Гомосексуальный мужчина, гомосексуал, гей

Гомосексуальная женщина, лесбиянка,  
женщина гомосексуальной ориентации

ЛГБТ(К)-сообщество, гомосексуальная  
ориентация, гомосексуал\_ка, человек  
гомосексуальной ориентации

Трансгендерный человек (персона),  
трансгендерная женщина, трансгендерный  
мужчина

Квир-персона

homosexual → gay

Lifestyle or preference → identity

Sex change → transition

# Feminitives

► How does the applicant describe themselves?

Как говорит о себе заявитель\_ница?

► Endings: -ка, -есса, -ша, -иня, -ца

- Студент - студентка
- Участник – участница
- Переводчик - переводчица
- Феминист – феминистка
- Бисексуал – бисексуалка

Gender\_gap, gender underscore, gender asterisk  
*Гендэргэп, гендерная звездочка, гендерный пробел*

- Студент\_ка
- Участни\_ца
- Феминист\*ка
- Бисексуал/ка

# Gender-neutral pronouns: English

- She/her
- He/him
- **They/them**
- **Ze/hir**
- Ey/em
- Xe/xem
- Te/tem
- Ver/vir
- *No Pronouns/Use My Name*

**They** noted that **their** partner would also be in danger if **they** returned.

The applicant talked about facing discrimination back home, which pushed **them** to seek asylum.

**Ze** recounted being attacked while out with friends.



Source: <https://pronouns.org/how>





# Gender-neutral pronouns: Russian

- **Они/их** (*they/them*)
- Оно/его (*neutral form*)
- Чередование он/она (*he/she alternating*)
- Только имя (*name only*)
- Гендергэпы (*Gendergaps*)

Мои местоимения – «**они/их**»:

- Я **рады**, что я в Америке. Считаю, что это замечательная страна.
- Я **боялись** оставаться дома и не **могли** спать по ночам.
- Ты очень **талантливы** и многого добьешься.
- Вы **могли бы** ответить на несколько вопросов?
- У **них** нет разрешения на работу.
- **Они** заполняли заявление **сами**.



[Source: here](#)

- “In my opinion, language will be far from the greatest concern for the LGBTQ+ movement in Russia as long as there is also rejection, hatred and a desire in society to ‘make these people normal.’”

Polyna Ravluyk, LGBT Activist

2018

# Activity. Attorney's Office

*Sight translate the declaration below for an asylum applicant. The applicant identifies as a non-binary person and uses pronouns they/them («они/ux») in Russian.*

... I have identified as non-binary since I was sixteen, then I read about it on Tumblr. I thought it was cool and support non-binary persons. Then a few of my friends came out as non-binary, and I thought: "Wow, they didn't know about it, decided they wanted it that way and it worked for them!"

When I was seventeen to nineteen, I identified as a transmasculine person and used the pronoun "he". I changed gender marker to «male» on my ID, took testosterone therapy, and had a top surgery. For a while, I introduced myself with a man's name at work.

Then, I realized it did not suit me, just like a more feminine expression didn't. I had friends who had started using the pronoun "they", so I was already used to it. I decided to try it out.

(Source: text adopted from. <https://www.wonderzine.com/wonderzine/life/life/251493-them-they-theirs>)

Thank you for being here!  
Please complete the session survey in the app.  
I welcome your feedback and questions.

Let's connect:

Email: [info@olgabogatova.com](mailto:info@olgabogatova.com)

Website: <http://olgabogatova.com/>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/olgabogatova/>



# Resources for Continued Learning: English

1. [Gender & Sexual Diversity Education Resources: LGBTTTQQIAAP – by G M Fahim Mugdho, originally published in Entrepreneur | Data Nerd on Apr 28, 2016](#)
2. [What Happens If You're Genderqueer — But Your Native Language Is Gendered?, October 20, 2017 / Erin Crouch](#)
3. [Human Rights Watch: Russia: First Convictions Under LGBT 'Extremist' Ruling, published on February 15, 2024](#)
4. [LGBTQ situation in Ukraine in January – June 2024, published gay.org.ua in July 2024](#)
5. Visual ratings of LGBT Rights in [Ukraine](#), [Russia](#), [Georgia](#), [Belarus](#), [Kyrgyzstan](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Tajikistan](#), [Turkmenistan](#), [Uzbekistan](#) at Equaldex, a collaborative knowledge base for the LGBTQ+ rights.
6. [LGBT Asylum Claims in the United States – Report by Williams Institute, published in 2021](#)

# Resources for Continued Learning: Russian

1. [Руководство по учету гендерной специфики в устной и письменной речи – ООН.](#)
2. [ЧТО ТАКОЕ ЛГБТКИАПП+: РАСШИФРОВКА АББРЕВИАТУРЫ И ГЛАВНЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ, опубликовано в частном блоге 22 июля 2020 г. на vk.com.](#)
3. [Как использовать местоимения «они» в единственном числе в русском языке? – Транс\\*коалиция, опубликовано 13 октября 2019 г.](#)
4. [Словарь гендерно-нейтрального языка](#)
5. [Отношение к феминитивам и гендерно-нейтральным формам в русском языке. Я. Кирей-Ситникова, 2018; www.transcoalition.net](#)
6. [ФЕМИНИТИВЫ В ИНТЕРНЕТ - ИЗДАНИИ WONDERZINE, ВАСИЛЬЕВА Е.Д. опубликовано в E-SCIO, 2020, 7\(46\)](#)
7. [Что случается, если вы гендерквир, а ваш родной язык гендерированный? Erin Crouch, Everyday Feminism | Перевод на русский язык, опубликовано 12 января 2020 г.](#)





## ПРИМЕР:

Женя - небинарный человек. Их местоимение "они". Женя использует окончания множественного числа вместо родовых окончаний и окончания единственного числа во всех остальных случаях.

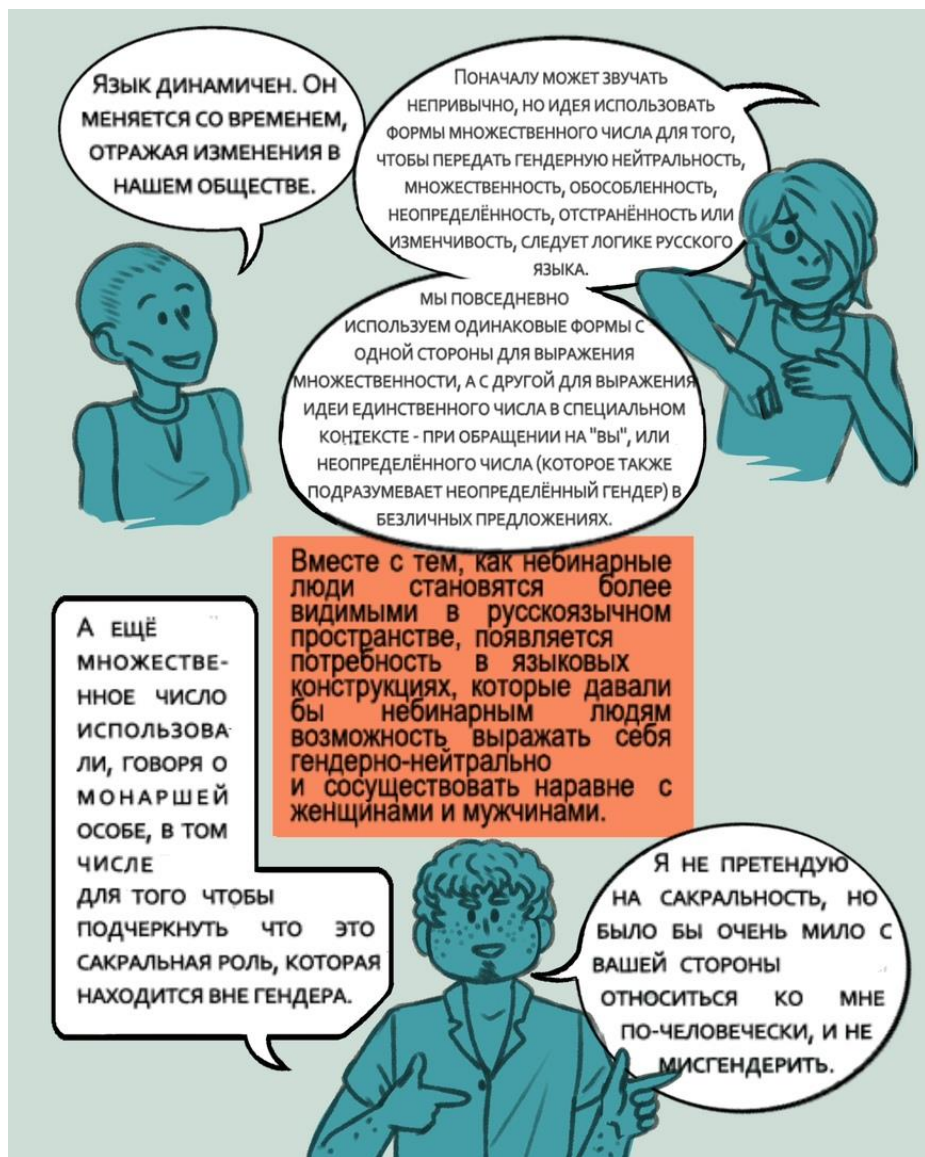


А местоимение "они" по отношению к одному человеку обычно просто используют с привычными формами множественного числа.



У многих слов в русском языке существуют две родовые формы или аналоги и в мужском, и в женском роде. Например, "друг" или "подруга", "человек" или "персона". Стоит спросить у небинарного человека, использующих гендерно-нейтральный язык, формы какого рода им предпочтительнее в этих пограничных случаях. На всякий случай всегда лучше уточнить!





Source: <https://www.facebook.com/nonbinaryru/photos/pcb.1063345500532477/1063344743865886>

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## Intersex person about her childhood experiences:

It seemed like everyone was very concerned about my body. People kept asking me if I was a girl or a boy. I would just say, 'I don't know. I'm just me.'

*«Казалось, что всех очень беспокоит мое тело. Люди все время спрашивали меня, девочка я или мальчик, и я говорила: “Я не знаю. Я – это просто я”».*

[Source: Intersex people and their rights, by OHCHR](#)

# Mix and Match



**A.** Разделение пола на две различные противоположные формы: мужской и женский.

**Бисексуальность**

**B.** Приведение гендерной роли и тела человека в соответствие с его внутренним самоощущением — гендерной идентичностью.

**Квир**

**C.** Романтическое и сексуальное влечение по отношению и к мужчинам, и к женщинам.

**Цисгендерность**

**D.** Совпадение гендерной идентичности и биологического пола.

**Гендерная бина́рность**

**E.** Человек (персона), чья сексуальность и/или гендерная идентичность отличаются от общественного большинства.

**Трансгендерный переход**

# Gender-neutral pronouns: Russian

- Я давно интересовалась темой ЛГБТ, читали интервью, истории про ЛГБТ, и мне всегда было странно, что в себе я не находили отклика. Но однажды в очередной раз я просматривали, какие еще выделили гендерные идентичности, и нашли свою. Я всю жизнь у себя в голове были просто «человек», просто «я», при этом я ощущали себя как человек без гендера, и мне всегда было странно, когда от меня требовали или ждали «женского» поведения, или относились ко мне как к стереотипной «женщине». Однажды подруга спросила меня в переписке, и я тогда сказали, что, пожалуй, я могу назвать себя небинарными.

Adapted from: <https://cfsphere.org/tpost/ntr0r04lu1-trudnosti-perevoda-kak-zhivut-nebinarnie>